



WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS

State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Office of Economic Advisors

FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

BARRON, CHIPPEWA, CLARK, DUNN, EAU CLAIRE, PEPIN, PIERCE, POLK, ST. CROIX

March 2004

Signs of Spring in February Labor Force

For months, nearly a year, glimmers of an improving employment picture, primarily in manufacturing, have raised hopes that jobs were increasing. February employment estimates again raise some hope that manufacturing employers are hiring. The number of manufacturing jobs in the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area increased by 100 in February to 11,100. Hitting that mark isn't that remarkable—it is no

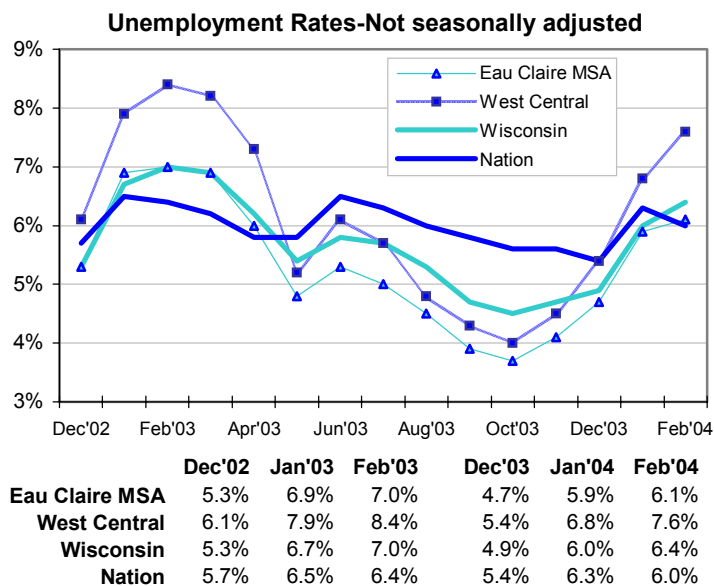
higher than in February 2002. The difference is that the number of manufacturing jobs typically declines in February and any increase begins in March or April.

The increase in manufacturing jobs only occurred in the metro area, however. The rural counties of West Central Wisconsin followed typical seasonal trends and reported a loss of 180 manufacturing jobs in February.

Another glimmer of hope is that the number of residents filing weekly claims for unemployment compensation benefits is lower than in the last two years. Again, the metro area is doing better than the rural counties. In the Eau Claire-Chippewa area claims have been lower than comparable weeks in the last two years since January 24. In the rural counties the number of claims has been lower than in 2003 since January 17 but dropped below the 2002 count only in the week ending March 13.

Current labor force estimates reflect activity in mid-February, too early to incorporate the recent drop in claims for the rural counties. In fact, the number of unemployed residents in West Central Wisconsin rose in February to over 18,500. With the increase came a rise in unemployment rate to 7.6 percent in February from 6.8 percent in January.

Eight west central counties were among the 68 counties in the state with higher unemployment rates in February. All but Pepin reported unemployment below one year ago and, with a 9.9 percent unem-



Civilian Labor Force Estimates for West Central Wisconsin counties: February 2004

	Barron			Chippewa			Clark			Dunn			Eau Claire Co.		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Labor force	25,322	25,097	24,841	33,331	32,304	32,499	16,914	17,013	16,313	24,585	24,698	23,816	56,552	55,057	54,771
Employed	22,999	23,108	22,300	30,612	29,803	29,411	15,302	15,460	14,507	23,017	23,307	22,106	53,832	52,409	51,719
Unemployed	2,323	1,989	2,541	2,719	2,501	3,088	1,612	1,553	1,806	1,568	1,391	1,710	2,720	2,648	3,052
% unemployed	9.2	7.9	10.2	8.2	7.7	9.5	9.5	9.1	11.1	6.4	5.6	7.2	4.8	4.8	5.6

	Pepin			Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			West Central region		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Labor force	3,284	3,264	3,057	21,970	21,819	21,508	23,988	23,741	24,005	39,811	39,188	39,116	245,757	242,181	239,926
Employed	2,958	2,966	2,760	20,454	20,447	19,962	21,713	21,870	21,483	36,292	36,282	35,421	227,179	225,652	219,669
Unemployed	326	298	297	1,516	1,372	1,546	2,275	1,871	2,522	3,519	2,906	3,695	18,578	16,529	20,257
% unemployed	9.9	9.1	9.7	6.9	6.3	7.2	9.5	7.9	10.5	8.8	7.4	9.4	7.6	6.8	8.4

* not seasonally adjusted

Industry Employment Estimates for West Central Wisconsin: February 2004

(Employment in thousands)	Barron			Clark			Dunn			Pepin		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Total Nonfarm	20.8	20.8	20.8	9.8	9.8	9.7	16.1	16.3	15.9	2.0	2.0	2.0
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Manufacturing	6.0	6.0	6.2	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.0	2.1	2.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Trade	3.3	3.4	3.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	2.7	2.7	2.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Transportation & Utilities	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.7	1.7	1.8	0.1	0.1	0.1
Financial Activities	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.4	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.7	0.8	0.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Info/Prof. & Bus.Serv./Other	1.6	1.6	1.5	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total Government	4.7	4.5	4.5	2.1	2.1	2.2	4.4	4.6	4.6	0.5	0.5	0.5
	Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			Eau Claire MSA		
	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03	Feb '04	Jan '04	Feb '03
Total Nonfarm	10.1	9.3	10.2	14.2	14.3	14.4	25.9	26.0	25.5	77.3	75.1	79.8
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	1.4	1.5	1.3	2.8	2.9	2.4
Manufacturing	1.0	1.0	0.8	3.6	3.6	3.7	5.1	5.1	5.4	11.1	11.0	11.0
Trade	0.8	0.8	1.1	2.1	2.1	2.0	4.3	4.4	4.2	12.7	13.0	12.3
Transportation & Utilities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.1	1.1	1.0	2.8	2.8	2.7
Financial Activities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.1	1.0	3.8	3.7	3.5
Education & Health Services	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	12.6	12.6	12.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	2.9	2.9	2.7	7.1	7.1	11.1
Information/Prof. & Bus.Serv.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.4	3.5	3.6	3.5	7.7	7.7	7.7
Other Services	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.8	3.8	3.7
Total Government	3.8	3.1	3.8	2.7	2.6	2.7	3.6	3.5	3.7	12.9	10.5	13.1

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2003 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

ployed, had the highest rate in the region in February.

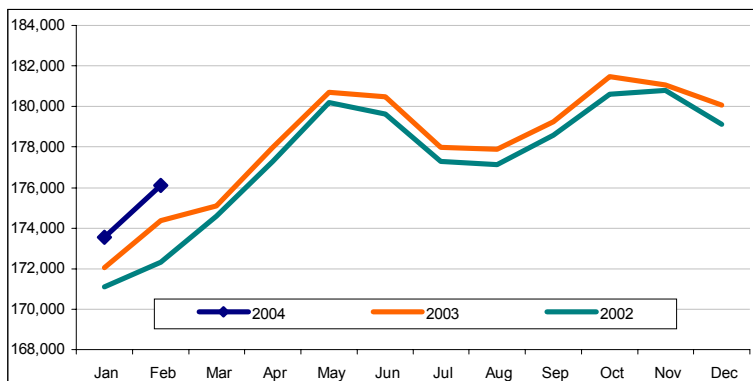
In Eau Claire County the rate was unchanged. The unemployment rate rose from 5.9 to 6.1 percent, not seasonally adjusted in the combined Eau Claire-Chippewa area. In the combined West Central area the rate rose from 6.8 to 7.6 percent.

Jobs should continue to increase over the next three months. Even in 2003, the

lowest Spring job growth of the last five years there were 8,660 jobs added to the local economy from January to May.

Nearly all of those jobs are from service-producing employers and many are filled by workers returning to jobs that were reduced during the winter months. Construction firms do account for about one-fifth of the added jobs, however, while manufacturing employers typically wait until May-June to add new workers.

Total Nonfarm Employment in West Central



Assistance sought from multiple worksite employers

Employers with operations in multiple locations (work sites) in Wisconsin are requested to complete a Multiple Worksite Report (MWR), PLEASE. Only affected employers are contacted and asked to complete the MWR during the first calendar quarter. All individual responses are kept confidential but collectively this valuable information is used: by business planners in economic development, forecasting, and wage analysis; by legislators in allocating dollars; and by individuals in making career decisions.

The department thanks the 3,300 employers who currently participate by reporting employment at over 25,000 work sites.

For more information contact

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Find the most current Labor Market Information at: WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI

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